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Extension Services
September 1983

Art Gallery of Ontario Masterpiece Exhibition Series

In the Fall of 1984, the Gallery will introduce as a pilot project a new component in its provincial exhibition program: the *Art Gallery of Ontario Masterpiece Exhibition Series*. Occasioned by a recent acquisition or recent research on the collection, each exhibition in the series will focus on a major work or a few related works and will offer the opportunity for a closer examination of important aspects of the Gallery's holdings. A brochure featuring a scholarly essay on the work(s) will accompany the exhibition along with other support material ranging from photo-documentation to extended labels and information panels. It is intended that these exhibitions will occur on an annual basis and will generally be available to three or four provincial centres. Coordinated by Karen Finlay, Assistant Curator, Exhibitions, the series will be launched in September 1984 with an exhibition guest curated by Dr. Bogomila Welsh, *An Intimate Glimpse of van Gogh at Nuenen. Life in the Vicarage and Studio as seen in a Recently Acquired Drawing*.

Requirements: Optimum security and environmental controls. Specifics given with individual exhibition information.

Bookings and Further Information: Contact Grace Desa, Scheduling Officer, Extension Services, (416) 977-0414.

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Vincent van Gogh, *The Vicarage at Nuenen: Seen from the Back with the Artist's Studio on the Right* c. 1884, graphite, pen and brown ink, brown wash, heightened with white, 24.3 x 35.6 cm, Collection Art Gallery of Ontario, Purchased with proceeds from the Annual Giving Fund, 1982

An Intimate Glimpse of van Gogh at Nuenen as seen in a Recently Acquired Drawing

The Art Gallery of Ontario had a unique opportunity to acquire its first work by Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) when *The Vicarage at Nuenen: Seen from the Back with Artist's Studio on the Right* came unexpectedly to auction at Sotheby's Toronto in March 1982. A great deal of interest was shown internationally by prospective bidders in Amsterdam, New York, and London, and the Gallery has been congratulated by museums and dealers abroad for having acquired the drawing and having kept it in Canada.

After the death in 1936 of the artist's sister Elizabeth Huberta, the drawing was sent to Canada to her son Felix Du Quesne Van Bruchem who had emigrated some years earlier. It shows the vicarage at Nuenen where Vincent's father Theodore, the Protestant pastor, lived with his family from 1882 until his death in 1885. The view is taken from the garden, and shows the back of the vicarage with the laundry room and storeroom on the right which became the artist's first studio. It was here that he conceived the Weavers and other peasant themes, and it was in a nearby studio in Nuenen that he painted *The*

Potato Eaters. One of the artist's sisters, possibly Elizabeth Huberta, is shown sewing or making lace on the porch while a typical peasant woman of the Province of Brabant stoops to tend the spring garden.

The moody character of this drawing, with its gray-brown tonality and expressionist tendencies is typical of van Gogh's Brabant period. It is technically complex, involving the use of graphite and stump rubbed to create broad tonal areas, as well as pen and brown ink and white body colour. The intricate and varied calligraphy of his line and spontaneous touches of body colour anticipate the artist's later Paris and Arles drawings. This is therefore a pivotal work, summing up the artist's Dutch past and anticipating his work in France. It is one of the most elaborate of his Dutch drawings, while being at the same time an intensely personal and autobiographical statement.

A variety of documentary materials, which have been gathered by Dr. Bogomila Welsh of the University of Toronto, are displayed with the drawing. These consist primarily of photographs of family members significant to Vincent during his Dutch period, as well as of the site of the vicarage and its environs, and of related studies and other works by the artist on the theme of the domicile atelier.

Dr. Welsh's original research on the drawing, which explains its important position in the development of van Gogh's art, is published in the accompanying brochure. Fifty brochures are included in the exhibition fee.

Guest curated by Dr. Bogomila Welsh.

Space: 1 drawing exhibited in a special display case, 6 information panels, 56 photographs with extended labels. An audio visual tape of an interview with Mr. Felix Du Quesne Van Bruchem and Dr. Bogomila Welsh is available to centres who can supply a 3/4" video player and colour television (video tape can be adapted upon request). 30.5 running metres (100 r.f.t.)

Weight: Approximately 3 crates

Fee: $500 (including 50 brochures)

Date available for circulation: September, October 1984, April, May 1985 (maximum of 3 bookings)

Security: Electronic alarm system. In constant view of an attendant (24 hour surveillance is essential)

Lighting: Incandescent only; maximum 50 lux

Temperature and humidity: Maximum fluctuation of ±10% from a norm of 50% humidity and between 20^{o} - 22^{o}C (68^{o} - 72^{o}F)